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OUR PROGRESS-IDEA AND THE WAR

GEORGE ROY ELLIOTT

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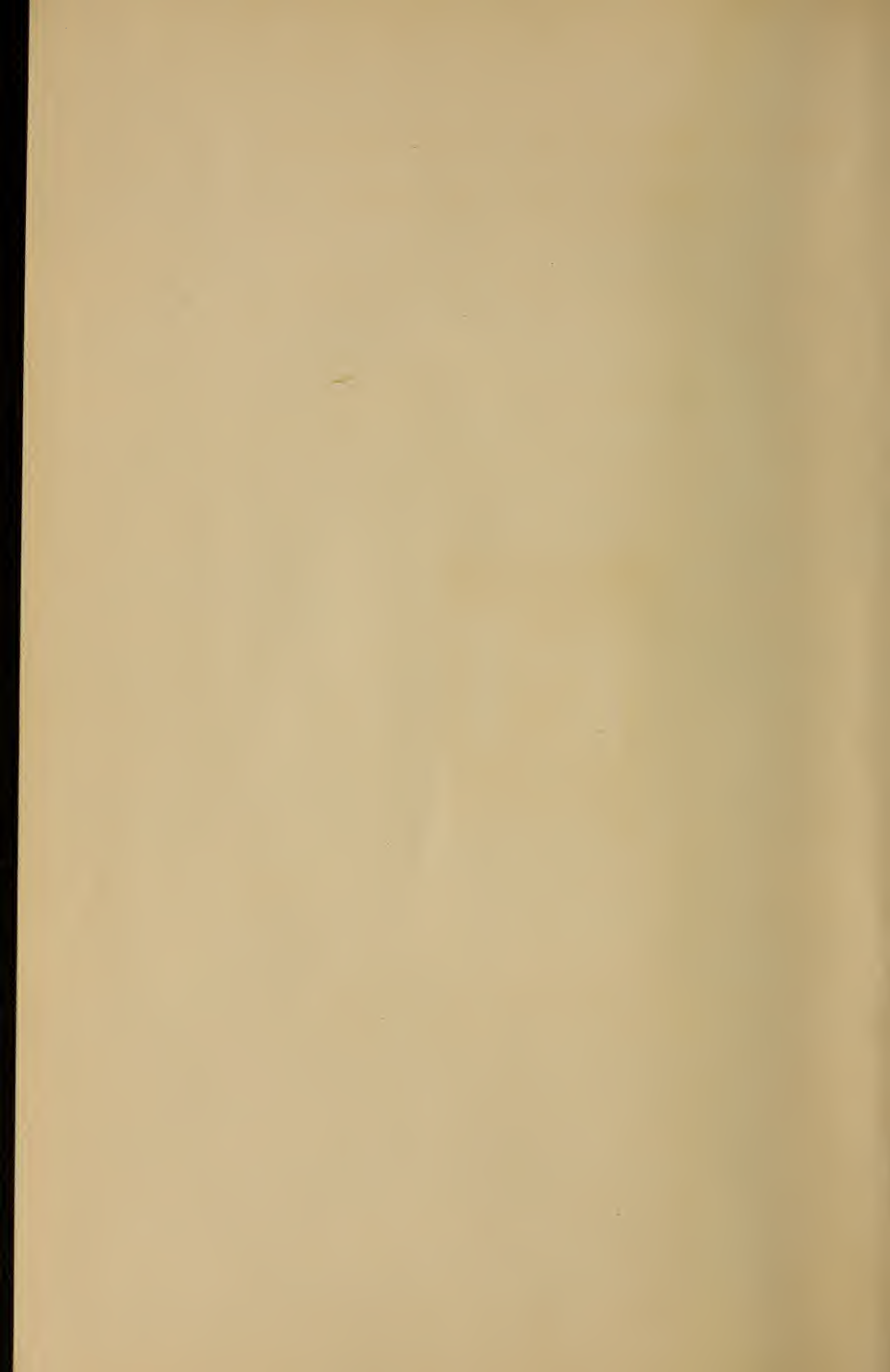


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OUR PROGRESS-IDEA AND THE WAR

An Essay Concerning Recent Literature

GEORGE ROY ELLIOTT



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Our Progress-Idea and the War

THE process of retrospective inquiry set afoot by a great war has two phases: the world's scrutiny of the nation at the centre of the struggle, and the world's scrutiny of itself. The first phase is just now fully operative, with Germany under the world's microscope; but the second is still inchoate. Like Germany today, France seemed a century ago a thing strangely isolate: the thought of other nations was preoccupied with the astounding divergences between her ways and theirs. But presently the world found that, in scrutinizing France, it had been brought face to face with itself. Europe saw that old sins of its own were being expiated in the upheaval induced by the Revolution; and that certain ideas, more obscurely at work in its own mind, had been carried in France to their logical and violent extreme. A similar situation must presently be faced in regard to Germany. And the discovery is bound to be made that the world's responsibility, in this case, is much more extensive, inasmuch as the relationships between nations have manifoldly increased and tightened since the eighteenth century.

New regions, including our own land, have been twined into the strands of world-thought. All countries under the shadow of European civilization have been netted in an intricate web of idea and influence; and the node called Germany has been drawn, during the past hundred years, ever nearer the centre of the web.

Keen and fruitful realization of this responsibility is still far from us. The general mind is indeed aware that certain specific tendencies, now unhappily strong in Germany, have been more or less at work, for some years past, in all the leading nations. But these recognized tendencies are comparatively superficial. Beneath them one must seek the international condition of human nature from which they grew. There are many evidences that this condition is still vastly obscure to the general eye. Consider, for instance, one of the many popular dicta in regard to Germany which the past two years have produced: "She is fearfully and wonderfully different from the Germany of Goethe." In this exclamation resides a deeper irony than that intended. The Germany of Goethe has become the Germany of today in essentially the same manner as that in which the England and America of his time have become the England and America of today; the difference between past and present in Germany, though more striking than in other na-

tions, has no exclusive quality of its own.

Every year added to our perspective makes more evident the widely representative character of Goethe. The apical position of Shakespeare in the Renaissance which initiated modern times, became Goethe's position in what may be called the Second Renaissance,—the great movement which rose in the eighteenth and exhausted itself in the latter part of the nineteenth century.¹ In the literature of the Second Renaissance, and notably in Goethe's work, we can best discern the stage of culture immediately preceding our own.

¹The Second Renaissance comprises of course the so-called Romantic Movement in literature, and much else. As for the chronological terminus: it is sufficient to note that the bulk of the best literature dominated by the Second Renaissance spirit was complete by the eighth decade of the century.

I

AT first glance it seems an unwarrantable assumption that an age which we may call our own—beginning, roughly speaking, some fifty years ago—can be so clearly distinguished from the Second Renaissance proper. The main ideas of the earlier period are still with us. Prominent among them is the one denoted by such terms as progress, development, and evolution in the broadest sense of the word. The conception of human life, both in the race and in the individual, as inherently in a state of evolutionary progress was a main theme of the Second Renaissance. A necessary complement of it was the idea of mankind's solidarity: the belief that a homogeneous life is working in all men, latently capable of transcending racial and national differences. Together with this complement, the idea of evolution was central in Goethe's thought and art, and he was aware of its epochal import. It is scarcely necessary to mention the evolutionary trend of his "philosophy," or the significance of his *Faust* as an epic of spiritual evolution in the individual life. As for the solidarity of mankind: one reads with strange emotions now the following pas-

sages in a letter of Goethe's to Carlyle, written in 1827, when the Second Renaissance was in its maturity:—"It is apparent that for a considerable time the efforts of the best poets and other artistic writers of various nations have been directed upon the qualities common to all mankind. In every special field, be it history, mythology, or fiction, the universal is seen to illuminate and shine through that which is national and individual. And since in practical life a like tendency is now active, winding its way through crude worldliness, through all that is unruly, cruel, false, selfish and hypocritical, and seeking everywhere to diffuse a certain amenity, we may hope, not indeed that universal peace will presently be instituted, but nevertheless that strife which is unavoidable shall become less and less bitter, warfare less savage, victory less insolent. . . . We may best arrive at a genuinely universal toleration by letting the peculiarities of individual persons and peoples rest on their own merits, at the same time holding fast to the conviction that genuine worth is distinguished by this mark: it belongs to mankind as a whole. To such mediation and mutual recognition the Germans have long been contributing their share."

The idea of evolutionary development with its various corollaries was diffused, primarily because of the time-spirit itself but partly because of the

large influence which Goethe's work began to exert upon certain leading writers of the century, through the best literature of Germany, France, England, and even America. Carlyle and Emerson caught it up and grafted it upon the hardy stock of Puritan morality. It lent direction to the broodings of philosophical poets such as Shelley and Browning. It was popularized in *Lockesley Hall*, *In Memoriam*, and a vast mass of poetry and prose with the like broad appeal. It appeared in widely different modes ranging from popular novels to unpopular critical essays. The idea was of course not new. But the Second Renaissance gave it intellectual and emotional catholicity, and thus brought it into a novel prominence. It became a criterion of ideas advanced in the leading departments of thought. Men endeavored to test the value for human progress of every factor at work in the complex of modern civilization.

Obviously, men have continued to do so; but in a more sophisticated manner, and with the increasing conviction that the progress-idea has taken root, during our time, in firmer ground than in the naiver day of our grandfathers. With such new guise the progress-idea appears, for instance, in Swinburne's *Prelude to his Songs Before Sunrise*, 1871. The author might well be conscious, in this poem, of preluding in ringing tones a rising age. The revised

attitude toward progress has increasingly characterized literature, down to recent writings of G. B. Shaw and contemporaries. And this literary utterance is merely the clear and sometimes extreme formulation of what has been going on more vaguely in the general mind. Here, the progress-idea has been brought to earth more determinedly than ever before, has become joined with an unprecedented desire to overcome actual conditions that hinder progress. In this new form, the idea has inspired ever-widening circles of propaganda, social, political, ethical,—including the peace-propagandum. International peace,—which for the Second Renaissance proper remained a vision, as Goethe's observations quoted above would suggest,—became for us a near and practicable goal.

Yet in spite of this widespread actualizing tendency, there is just now a feeling, bound to deepen with every passing month, that our idea of progress is in some way ineffectual. This feeling is different from the initial shock of the War which mined our faith in the peace-propagandum. It rises from the contemplation of the enormous energy which the struggle has evoked in the warring countries, and which every day further confutes the initial prophecies that exhaustion would soon bring on the end. How will the final sum-total of this energy, we ask ourselves, compare with the total energy which

all the progressive propaganda of the past half century, including the peace movement, have been able to enlist? It is this comparison which is stimulating within us, consciously or not, a conviction that the progress-idea in our time has been less effective than prominent, professedly actualistic and yet in the main haltingly theoretic.

II

WHAT are the conditions of the desire for progress when it is most fruitful? The answer may be found in the history of literature, and especially of that inner sphere evincing the emotional quality of belles-lettres. For in spite of a current theory to the contrary, bred of the popularization of rational processes, the representative function of poetry and artistic prose has not departed, and cannot depart, with the intellectual advance of mankind. One may claim that, broadly speaking, the essence of any era must be emotional; that, for instance, when the compelling intellectual constructions of the past hundred years shall in the future have been demolished or made over, certain gains of the human heart therefrom will remain and become clear. The indissoluble quality, the raw material, of human life is emotional energy. The effect of intellectual and moral forces is to give shape and direction to this; the function of artistic literature is to phrase the result in comparatively durable symbols.

The history of literature—that is, of mankind's emotional energy under the moulding influences of

successive stages of culture—shows us that this energy, when most effectual for civilized progress, follows two strong tendencies operating in close conjunction with each other. One is dualistic: it accentuates and energizes all the contrasts of life from the meanest to the highest. The other is monistic: it seeks a unity beneath every pair of contrasts. Each of the two tendencies thus reacts upon the other and fosters it, urging life toward its richest development through an ever ascending pursuit of contrast and harmony. The culminating and most inclusive phase of this process is the sense of “two worlds”, one outward and immediate, the other inward and transcendent; strongly in contrast with each other, yet moving in a certain fundamental harmony.

Whatever else it may be, this process is in its essence emotional. Channels for it are laid by the dialectic intellect,—by the mind divorced, in a more or less degree, from emotional reality. The intellect obeys the omnific law of contrast and harmony in restricted fashion. It isolates a special series of contrasts—in the region of theology, or natural science, or some field falling between these two opposite poles—which it can solve in a limited principle of unity. While therefore it shapes and tends to clarify the emotional life, it must also divide and hem it into grooves, like channels in the bed of a

stream. When the emotional life approaches a high level, as in the great age of Greece and during the First and Second Renaissance, it rises above this channeled network and strives to cover the whole stream-bed. The more we contemplate such ages the more assured we become that human nature then sought, and won in an exceptional degree, a certain wholeness of action. This phenomenon has never found an adequate name, though those who were under the spell of it constantly sought one. Witness the peculiar denotation of the term "reason" for certain Second Renaissance writers: it indicated that rise of the emotional life, through but beyond the moulds of intellect, which I tried to describe above under an inadequate figure.

The striving for fullness of life in those ages was a central impetus transmitting vigor on into many isolative channels of thought and practical endeavor, which thus benefited from it even while disqualifying it. But its own peculiar and intimate sign was a significant development of literature. For literature, in so far as it becomes true art, is sensitive to the exact degree of emotional reality in every concept. When therefore true emotion fulfills and transcends the processes of the mind, great literature results. And such literature, viewed as a whole, is seen to record that culminating phase noted above of the law of contrast and harmony.

The best literature of the ages of Sophocles, Shakespeare, and Goethe illuminates, almost apotheosizes, our immediate world; but even in so doing, throws it into a keenly felt contrast with "the other world"; and seeks, implicitly or deliberately, to represent the harmony in which the two are felt to move.

It is now easy for us to see that the Middle Ages at their darkest and the eighteenth century were times when the emotional life was subsiding, rather than rising, in its intellectual grooves. It is less easy to realize that our own time belongs in the same category: for the age's eye is busy with the amazingly complex network of channels which life has now developed, and is out of focus for estimating the level of the total stream. But as a matter of historical fact the situation is this: In the Middle Ages human life, under the ever present urge of the law of contrast and harmony, undertook a restricted fulfillment of this law by means of other-worldly dialectic. Our age, with the aid of this-worldly dialectic, has passed to the other extreme; and future generations, looking back on us, will experience the same sense of ebb and confinement as when they contemplate the Middle Ages and the eighteenth century.

III

WE should realize that the this-worldly forces called into activity during the Renaissance, and thereafter developing continually in spite of certain counter tides, have approached their logical culmination only in our day. They have done so through the fostering action of democracy on the one hand, and of natural science on the other. Democracy means the definitive rise of the average man as an important factor in civilization. The emotional life of the average man is not rich, and may easily be directed by external influences into some restricted channel, theological or otherwise. The discovery of America, the growth of commerce and presently of industry, the ensuing philosophic generalizations of economics, socialism, and so on—these have constituted a homogeneous influence focussing his attention more and more upon purely mundane relationships. Within the past fifty years the process has culminated: the “people,” now sufficiently capable of rational thinking, have become dominated by what may be called the economic view of the universe.

A parallel development has gone on in the realm of natural science, which the Renaissance reani-

mated. Astronomy, physics, and chemistry were comparatively remote from the life of the people. But in the nineteenth century biology and geology, by expounding people's bodies and the earth they grew from, could produce a powerful moulding effect on the general mind. This effect was in the same general direction as the economic influence, and during the past fifty years has become definitively amalgamated with it. The labor of men's hands and minds is now seen as the refined extension of the forces found at work in nature. The scientist Huxley, uttering the following specious words to an audience of working-men in 1868, is a symbol of this junction of two dominant and parallel interests:—"I weigh my words well when I assert that the man who should know the true history of the bit of chalk which every carpenter carries about in his breeches-pocket, though ignorant of all other history, is likely, if he will think his knowledge out to its ultimate results, to have a truer and therefore a better conception of this wonderful universe, and of man's relation to it, than the most learned student who is deep in the records of humanity and ignorant of those of Nature." The view of life here suggested, in which the records of man's other-worldly thought and emotion are submerged, and the interests of a semi-enlightened working democracy are hinged upon natural forces, may be conveniently

termed "demonaturalism."

The forces that fostered demonaturalism have gradually submerged those movements which, during the past four centuries, have endeavored to conserve the best development of other-worldly emotion won by the Middle Ages. The successive efforts in this direction of Protestantism and its offshoots have obviously descended the scale of emotional energy. In the atmosphere of the past half century a revival comparable to Methodism would obviously have been impossible. Christian Science, which in this country has had such notable success in proselytizing, owes its distinctive vitality not to its other-worldly monism but to what it has absorbed from demonaturalism. And this fact signalizes what has happened to institutional Christianity (in its extramedieval forms) as a whole. It has ceased more and more to be a public force for other-worldliness; and its practical ethics, during our time, have continually coalesced significantly with the ethics of demonaturalism. Hence, by way of reaction, there have appeared such phenomena as the cultivation of Buddhistic mysticism in western lands: a re-groping for the other-worldly motivation of conduct, for the star of the wise men of the East.

But modern institutional Christianity, unlike the ancient and medieval forms of religion, has never become identified with the central course of civili-

zation. This passed through the Renaissance, and through the Second Renaissance which resumed and endeavored to carry forward its work. In the Renaissance at its best, the other-worldly motivation developed by the Middle Ages was preserved in the realm of conduct and revived in the realm of beauty; the Second Renaissance endeavored more distinctively to carry it also into the realm of philosophic truth. The Renaissance was no doubt somewhat hampered by fleshliness. But the Second Renaissance was blockaded powerfully by the gathering forces of demonaturalism. To this conflict, which split the nineteenth century into two camps, is attributable much of the extremeness often appearing in the works of the chief writers: the deliberate abstraction and often thin remoteness of Wordsworth, Emerson, and Shelley from a world that was "too much with us"; or on the other hand, the stains and dust of battle in the work of such as Carlyle. Carlyle was eminently characteristic of the Victorian stage of the Second Renaissance in his desire to affect the new audience, the "people", with his thunders against the tightening worldliness of demonatural ethics. But the cultural movement of which he was so ungracious an exponent has been cut under by the one he opposed, as a wave by a hard undertow.

Hence the decline of literature, during the past fifty years, in practically all departments. Taste

and technique have advanced in some departments; but there has been a general shrinkage in substance-value. Nevertheless our most characteristic writers (I am leaving out of account men like Bridges, Phillips, and so on, who continued the paling Victorian vein) have been exceptionally conscious of extending human emotion in many directions previously neglected, under the guidance of certain concepts more reliable than those their predecessors had access to. They have failed to perceive that these concepts derive from a restrictive system of dialectic thought, demonaturalism, which denotes a shrinkage of the emotional life just as decisive as that denoted by Deism in the eighteenth century. It should be added that the literature of our age has a mystic strain of its own. But this, like the religious phenomena noted above, has evinced either the thinness of extraneity or an ambiguous vitality produced by assimilation to demonaturalism.

Our Demos, which during the Middle Ages was being lured by narrow heavenly gleams to draw out from the morass of barbarism, has just now advanced sufficiently to bend its energy effectively upon cultivating the firm earth, and not sufficiently "to hoe the dream in with the dung" (if I may wrest from its context a phrase of Mr. Percy Mackaye's). Its attitude toward life has permeated the age, reducing the supreme modes of thought and lending to those

which are restricted enough to harmonize with its own a certain earthly vigor. Life has been restricted, more definitively than ever before, to its sheer this-worldly terms. So that though the stream of civilized energy, so to speak, be bulkier than ever before and have spread itself through a wider network of channels, its total level is lower now than it has been during certain earlier periods. In other words, our capacity for central cultural progress is less now than it was during the height of the Second Renaissance.

Yet the sense of progress and the idea of progress have remained extraordinarily prominent. This paradox is illuminated when we recall a certain hoary trick of destiny. After every great creative movement of the human heart in the past, the idea which it vitalized has remained for a while like the outline of a motion-picture in which the light is gradually dimming,—so gradually that the audience sits at gaze, until suddenly the screen turns blank, and perhaps an outbreak of fire in the theatre intimates that something has gone wrong with the current supplying the lantern. Upon the subsidence of the Renaissance movement, its best idea, that of conduct completing itself harmoniously in humane beauty, seemed to live on in the Neo-Latin conventionalism, ethical and artistic, of the eighteenth century. The predominant cult of the time was not ade-

quately aware that a glory had faded, and constantly patronized the Renaissance in a manner to amuse later generations. Quite parallel is the attitude, common at present, toward the Second Renaissance; in England, and partly in America, one of its specific manifestations is an extreme anti-Victorianism which will amuse our successors. The progress-idea of the Second Renaissance has persisted. But it has degenerated into a cult concept and has lost true vitality in the same manner as the Renaissance idea in the eighteenth century. It has not maintained the full tide of emotional energy which a century ago was setting into it.

IV

THERE can be no general recognition of this situation so long as the general eye wears the film of superficial rationality which demonaturalism has drawn over it. Our age, unlike the eighteenth century, is keenly aware of the past, and takes the awareness for comprehension. We of Germany, England, and America have not repudiated that which inspired Goethe, Wordsworth, and Emerson. We acknowledge it. The multitudinous average man, who through the agency of the democratic college or the printing-press has been educated beyond the secondary school stage, has a fair grasp of its position in "the development of our race." He knows that the earlier nineteenth century opened a range of grand ideas for the race. He believes that a certain haze, intellectual and emotional, which at first surrounded them has now been dissipated; that the essentials remain, with necessary adjustments which have enabled us to follow progress on firm ground. This smug attitude of mind is difficult of conversion. The present War may do as much for the demonaturalism of Europe as the French Revolution did for the politer rationalism of the eigh-

teenth century; but the converting effect of warfare may easily be overestimated. America, in any case, may remain comparatively somnolent. Particularly we in America, then, should probe the progress-idea which we have nourished in common with Europe, and become clearly aware of the change which has overtaken it in our age.

True to the dualistic constitution of human nature, the Second Renaissance at its best realized that the modern conception of progress should give full scope to the eternal motive-desire for contrast and unity; that it should assume and further edify our persistent sense of two worlds distinct but essentially in harmony. With this sense, the chief authors strove to connect the rising consciousness of progress, of supernational solidarity, of mankind's relation to nature. They believed that beneath the ties which humanity was capable of weaving across national divisions, was to be recognized the working of an other-worldly entity, which underlay also the relationships between man and nature. On this second score Emerson's view may be cited, as widely typical. Man and nature, for him, rose from a single source and exhibited a constant correspondence. The special value of nature for man was that it presented for his contemplation the universe in simplified form, "as the city of God" in which "there is no citizen." To perceive the inevitability

of law in that primitive and comparatively obvious sphere, was to be trained for the higher and more difficult task of perceiving it in the moral sphere distinctive of mankind. But only in the development of his own characteristic morality could man truly progress or "evolve."

The representative authors were also keenly aware, at their best, of the danger that human progress might be conceived as a flux in which nothing for certain could remain. They dwelt upon the harmonies underlying life's shifting contrasts, upon the fact that human evolution meant the fuller and fuller realization of a spiritual realm which itself was stable. In 1852, when a different conception had become current, Carlyle wrote that, though certainly an unprecedented revolution in human affairs had been coming about, "The great Galileo, or numerous small Galileos, have appeared in our spiritual world also, and are making known to us that the sun stands still; that as for the sun and stars and eternal immensities, they do not move at all . . . that it is we and our dog-hutch that are moving all this while, giving rise to such phenomena; that if we would ever be wise about our situation we must now attend to that fact."

Of central importance was the insistence upon moral evolution in the individual life as the basis

of all progress. "What are the convulsions of a city compared with the convulsions of a soul?" exclaims Hugo, than who no writer of the time was more tensely sympathetic to the revolution which was remaking the political and social body of mankind in Europe; "man is verily a greater profundity than the people." *Les Miserables*, melodramatic and sometimes absurd as it is, will remain the criterion of novels until novelists learn to surpass its concrete representation of an individual soul battling to realize its complete moral possibilities. From this book one's memory passes to scores of other Second Renaissance works which strove to embody the same conception. Tennyson's intimation that it was Goethe who had impressed him with the truth on which *In Memoriam* is founded,

"That men may rise on stepping stones
Of their dead selves to higher things,"

is suggestive of the degree in which the leading authors of various nations were preoccupied with this old steady subject of thought. They stood on the conviction, moreover, that though the rational intelligence was to be regarded as the special and hard won heritage of the modern individual, and the surest implement for his development, nevertheless this development itself was essentially a preter-

rational process, an eduction of power from the other world into this. Love, conceived as a distinctly spiritual force projected into natural conditions, was constantly treated as the main means of this process. Browning's representation of progress in the individual life—accomplished mainly in supreme converting moments through the agency of a love which, in Browning, is sometimes all too irrational—is to be regarded, not as a break with the evolutionary conception of progress predominant with other authors of the Second Renaissance, but as an extreme development from it, fostered by this poet's vigorous and instinctive reaction from the growing naturalism which he found around him.

SUCH was the conception of progress which, though finding its richest expression in literature, was moving in the general mind during the Second Renaissance and striving to realize itself there. The ghost of it remains to-day. The progress-idea still involves the conception of a reality transcending national and other divisions, and connecting man with nature. For this reality old names have often been retained, as "soul" and "spirit" in Swinburne and others, suggesting the mystic regard which still attaches to it; but by growing preference, and with less ambiguity, it is referred to as "life" or "nature." In any case it stands for the life of nature extended in mankind and monistic in its mode of operation. For this entity, the Pagan "Earth" was felicitously revived by George Meredith, in the instinctive attempt to find a term which could denote human and natural life in one. The same phenomenon is back of Swinburne's "Hertha." But Meredith deserves especial attention, for though he has not in any marked degree reached the popular favor, he has become the poets' poet and the novelists' novelist, a great power behind the throne of literary demonaturalism. In his poetry Meredith

seeks to obviate the old bi-worldly conception of life, which he deems outworn. He several times uses the words "God" and "soul," but thins their old antithetic signification to a shadow. God has no real meaning apart from Earth:

"She can lead us, only she,
Unto God's foot-stool, whither she reaches."

"Soul" he treats as a transient aspect of spirit which, in turn, is for him coterminous with the life of Earth: "For Earth that gives the milk, the spirit gives." Human progress, according to Meredith and his colleagues in England and other nations, is essentially the evolution of Earth.

She is restless for change, always "quick at her wheel," as Meredith puts it. Here is the root of the unexampled restlessness which pervades the literature characteristic of our age. The restlessness which during the preceding age was at work in the fringes of literature has in our day penetrated to its centre, displacing contemplation of "the things which do not move at all." The sturdiest writers have borne this restlessness stoically, rejoicing in sheer flux as in a cold water plunge. But it has tended increasingly toward pessimism in their weaker brethren. One notes this in Thomas Hardy, for instance, when he wailingly denies the existence of the gods

and in the same breath scolds them for their maltreatment of helpless human beings.

As for the progressive function of the individual man, one finds what at first seems a strangely paradoxical attitude toward it. In Mr. H. G. Wells' *First and Last Things*, there appears on many pages an extreme glorification of the individual. The writer might have taken for his text Emerson's "I will write 'whim' over the lintels of my door-post," albeit he has consistently degraded the quality of the whim. Here, then, we have Second Renaissance individualism run riot. Yet on many other pages appears an extremely socialistic attitude. The paradox is characteristic of demonaturalism, and it is not difficult to solve. Progress, both in the individual and the race, is conceived as the evolution of natural desires, directed by dialectic reason. This is the thought which shines, for instance, in the lines of the revived drama, from Ibsen to Shaw, and is reflected even in the pages of such as Björnson who, if born fifty years earlier, would have been "merely Victorian" in their attitude toward life. According to this view, disconcerting influxes of emotion which seem to derive from a preternatural source must ordinarily be debarred from the field of human motives. Yet our awareness of the past renders inescapable the fact that many great individuals who have spurred human progress were inspired by just

such influxes: their work is not conceivable as the normal result of Earth plus rationality. We must regard them, therefore, as useful variants: not as persons who, according to the old view, carried to a high level that which is normally latent in average human nature, but as splendid abnormalities. But some of us, too,—including Mr. Wells,—may feel within ourself the urge of some splendidly abnormal impulse. Since it derives from Nature, it is potentially good. Then let us give it considerable rein, for the sake of self-development and the possible good of the social body—so long as, in contemplating the progress of men in the mass, we steadily hold to the criterion derived from the commonsense rationality of the average man. Thus there is a natural coherence between the extremely individualistic and the extremely socialistic attitudes toward progress.

Hence the conception, quite foreign to the Second Renaissance at its best, that the criterion for group or racial development may be different from that for the development of the individual. Demonaturalism shrinks from the contrast between the kind of human nature evinced in the highest type of individuals and the kind evinced by men in the mass. It has sought relief by following, to some extent, the tendency to arrant skepticism in regard to "Heroes" which Carlyle stormed against. No doubt this tendency is active; it finds expression in the attitude of

Shaw and others toward rare types of emotional life which humanity has learned to reverence. But the general mind soon recognizes such an attitude as abnormal since, as Carlyle himself pointed out, it too blatantly offends the instincts of humanity. But deep roots have been struck by the other tendency: that of assuming, consciously or not, that the criterion for individuals may be higher than the criterion for general progress.

The literature of our age has been immensely conscious of *Demos*; it has reflected in unprecedented fashion the state of mind of the average man. This means a great deal more than the fact that for two centuries there has been steady growth of the popular novel and other literature designed for the taste of the people. It means that there has come about a crucial shift of thought in regard to human progress. The vision of the prophet, priest, and king is conceded as an historical fact but discredited as a real criterion. The appeal for judgment is to the average state of mind. When Swinburne, Meredith, Wells, Shaw, and the others ridicule the romantic visions of the Second Renaissance and glorify, in contrast, what they call brain, commonsense, and so on, they refer to the average thinking of human society stimulated by the natural desires common to us all. The failure of Meredith's novels to be artistic wholes, is in a large measure due to his

insistent urging of the human average into a role which it cannot fill: for example, in the cases of Janet in *Harry Richmond* and Redworth in *Diana*.

The term love has accordingly shifted its denotation. Recent writers of France, Germany, and England have concentrated their thought and imagination, to a degree unparalleled in literary history, upon the sheerly natural aspects of love. They have deemed, too, that as man is naturally sexual so he is naturally friendly, and desires, in a considerable measure, the good of his neighbor. Affection, sexual and fraternal, is among the strongest of natural forces. If we can learn to guide its impulses with free but rational skill, the result will be progress, with individual happiness, international peace, and other desirable concomitants.

VI

ITS love has been one of the weakest elements of demonaturalism. On the one hand, it has encouraged certain anti-social vagaries which are condemned by the commonsense of demonaturalism itself, but which indicate a certain rankness in the soil. On the other hand, it has thickened those vapors of pseudo-democratic humanitarianism and pacifism which have obscured for so many people, not only the question of true honor and justice, but those very facts of international life which the spirit of the time felt itself competent to deal with. This kind of love, because of its inherent weakness, has been most submerged in that country which has brought the demonatural progress-idea as a whole to its firmest development, namely Germany. That country has completely and frankly distrusted the value of demonatural affectionateness in the sphere of international politics; Anglo-Saxondom has distrusted it very considerably and without frankness. This difference between Germany and other lands is slight, however, when compared with deeper resemblances.

By reason of its supreme vitality, Germany took the lead in the idealistic movement of a century

ago, and gave the world preeminent philosophers and the chief poet of the time. The same vitality diverted into new channels made Germany the leader in the demonaturalist movement of our age. But the close relation between the present state of German culture and our own is obscured for the average Anglo-Saxon by his naive proclivity for identifying democracy with certain political forms and modes which have become regnant in England and America but not in Germany. These, however, are partial and quite possibly not permanent manifestations of that which constitutes the irrefragable essence of democracy: the rise of the average man into the function of a shaping factor in civilization. In Germany the average man has done more thinking during the past fifty years than he has in other lands, and has had a larger determinant effect on national culture. He has been freer from submissive reverence for the higher humanity emanating from rare men, and for the noblest criteria for human life which have been accumulated during history. He has more actively and consciously assimilated the mediocre insights of demonaturalism. Witness, for instance, the popularity in Germany of Haeckel's atheistic "Monism." It was level with the rational capacity of the working-man of Germany; it would have been above that capacity in America. Quite similar in significance

was the pseudo-aristocratic philosophy of Nietzsche. His superman is a distillation of the desires and capabilities of the recent average man, with his animal blood beating high, with his newly conscious mentality bent on self-exploitation, with his blindness to great moral antitheses. The same quite bourgeois superman is adumbrated in the pages of Shaw, Wells, and others, including that sturdy demonaturalist poet whom we had the honor of producing in the dawn of the age, Walt Whitman. In the economic sphere, one needs no reminder that during the past half century Germany became the chief exponent of the material astuteness and ambition of the average man. That the situation in the political sphere is similar, is just now being forced home to the American mind by accumulating evidences of the state of public opinion in Germany. The German government owes its amazing efficiency, and also its amazing obliviousness of certain humane considerations, to its supreme capacity for interpreting and using the average popular state of mind. Thus Germany was able unitedly and effectually to follow our prevailing idea of progress, while Anglo-Saxondom, until recently, awarded her more and more applause and emulation.

VII

THE conception of progress outlined above has at once its result and its refutation in the present war. In the first instance all the new sinews of war, and certain palpable motives, have been provided by demonaturalism. Nevertheless this movement, in Germany as elsewhere, has been centrally and sincerely opposed to war. What is the solution of this paradox? The solution most current just now is that the War is the result of a failure, preeminently on the part of Germany, completely to apprehend and follow the main spirit of our age. Interpreting this we may say that the War proceeded from the demonatural progress-idea, indeed, but from a fatally partial interpretation or misvision of it. If the War were only this, one might hope that when the misvision has been corrected we may have sound international relations and permanent peace. But one must recognize more plainly every day that, though demonaturalist in its more obvious motives and its material sinews, the War does not derive from this source its grand sustaining power.

The immense emotional energy which is moving the ships and armies of Europe, and shows no sign

of flagging, is a riddle to the demonaturalist intellect. The War has drawn its main strength from energies not comprehended by the time-spirit. Hence the general consciousness that this war is very different in quality from those of the past two centuries, that it is an extraordinary anomaly at the present time, that it has something in common with medieval warfare. Actually, the War is the complement of the religious warfare of old days. Superficially actuated by a spirit of this-worldliness as extreme and abnormal as the other-worldly impetus of the Crusades, this War, like the Crusades but in the opposite direction, has given violent and relieving expression to emotional energies discountenanced by the dominant dogma of the time. The Crusades drew their sustaining energy from a wide-spread worldly love of adventure and fighting, ordinarily not sanctioned by the Church; the present war draws its sustaining energy from a widespread other-worldly devotion to national spirit, ordinarily not sanctioned by demonaturalism. In each case the formulated faith of the time provided merely the shape and direction,—the stream-bed in which the widespread energy could accumulate, and from which it could overflow into war.

How the demonatural idea of progress has cut the way for international struggles should be clearly evident. Our age has had dinned in its ears the fact

that Nature achieves progress through the competition of species. In our human case the species are nations; and we should aim to develop them by efficient cooperation with the laws of nature in all spheres of corporate activity. But in employing we must also improve upon the method of nature—so runs the creed. We must do so by completely mastering the use of that superb tool which marks the climax of nature's achievement—the tool by means of which nature corrects herself—namely, the human rational intelligence. This is teaching us that the internecine warfare of nature is far below the true level of her great offspring, and that economically and in many other ways it arrests our development. Rational cooperation among nations is essential to the highest development of each, and to that of mankind as a whole. Ultimately the individual nation is of value only in so far as it contributes to the progress of our greatest species, mankind. Here is the chief object of our loyalty, the ultimate motive of all our living.

“Enough of light is this for one life's span,
That all men are born mortal, but not man;
And we men bring death lives by night to sow,
That men may reap and eat and live by day.”

(SWINBURNE).

But as an ultimate object of loyalty, mankind, in

the demonatural conception of it, could not possibly prove adequate. This function has never in actuality been fulfilled by a mankind reduced to its natural and this-worldly terms, and cannot be even now when there beckons ahead of us a future mankind with all its capacities raised to the highest degree. Swayed by the deepest law of progress, the law of contrast and harmony, a people can give its ultimate and strongest loyalty only to what it feels to be preterhuman and preternatural. The tribe or nation, not mankind, has always been and is now more than ever the social entity which most successfully meets this condition. Here, then, is the real solution of our paradox, of the fact that the age which has cultivated, more deliberately than any preceding age, the idea of serving mankind through a true international spirit, has produced the direst outbreak of nationalism that the world has yet seen. Demonaturalism has urged: "Develop the nation, but do so in the service of our new god, Mankind." Demos has responded vigorously; but in fulfilling the mandate to develop the nation, has added, "Come, when in the mood for worship let us worship here also: the old god is more real than the new."

Though especially prominent in Germany, this other-worldly spirit of nationalism was at work before the War also in the other leading nations engaged. The conflict has been simply bringing it into

full activity in each nation. Its marks in recent German literature have come before the world's eye; its increasing influence in the literature of other nations will presently be studied more carefully. Professor J. A. Cramb's *Germany and England*, published in England before the War, is characteristic. Its gloomy lack of faith in the highest human emotions is obviously the result of the confining pressure exerted upon the author by our demonaturalist age. The craving to break through this confinement is obviously the source of his militaristic nationalism with its conscious and deliberate note of other-worldliness. Much of Rupert Brooke's poetry exhibits the confining conceits of demonaturalism; glad sense of a national outlet from this view of life rings in his war sonnets. The semi-religious nationalism which was rising in French fiction before the War, in reaction from the spirit of the age, has been commented on in the columns of various journals. I cannot here multiply examples. Suffice to say that an other-worldly nationalism, taking shape within the demonatural shell and breaking through it, is a literary phenomenon of our age which will interest the future historian.

VIII

THE War, then, has flowed up from emotional energies far deeper than the control of our age. And yet it seems to the public mind, particularly in America, the result merely of a misvision which can be reabsorbed, as it were, and corrected by the spirit of our age. The multifarious planning for the establishment of a true internationalism after the War, remains essentially of the same quality as it was before the War began, and is dominated by the demonatural ethic. This ethic is ineradicably monistic. It strives to identify national with international interests. It urges that any clash between these interests is only apparent, not real, and can be completely overcome by the exercise of dialectic intelligence. But the old national ethic, which has been steadily developing since the days of the tribal god and will have been immensely strengthened by the present war, is much more in tune with the law of life. It renders the individual man strongly aware of the contrast between his personal interests and those of his nation, at the same time making him feel the presence of an underlying harmony which is not reducible to terms of this world. It will draw the full

sweep of his emotional and therefore material support, whenever there arises a decisive clash between the interests of the nation and those of whatever supernational entity can be created by demonatural ethics.

The demonatural notion that commercial materialism acts as a permanent ethical force to prevent war should by now have disappeared, in view of what has happened in Europe. But the notion as applied to America still obtains widely in this country, partly on account of our present Government's endeavor, with unexampled patience, to keep clear of the European struggle; mainly, however, under the unconscious assumption that political human nature is shaped differently here. As a matter of fact commercial materialism, here and everywhere, works in the opposite direction. First, it makes people underestimate the motivating power of national emotion; this effect is apparent at present in American views respecting the causes of the War, their essential remoteness from us, the possible duration of the War, and so on. Secondly, it renders them all the more helpless in the grasp of this emotion when strong international differences arise; this effect was apparent here at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, and would become suddenly active again if our Government should break with Germany. One may help to clear his mind of the

ethical delusion in regard to commercial materialism by considering, side by side, the following two editorial utterances on the subject of economic wealth, one from a leading American and the other from a leading German newspaper. The demonaturalist conception of progress appears, in the first extract, under conditions of peace; in the second, under conditions of war and superheated with the emotion of self-sacrificing patriotism. (1) "Business management, morals, and conduct are on a higher level than ever before, and there is more co-operation between all classes of people, a recognition to a greater degree than ever before that it is to the advantage of each to have all others prosper. All the wealth there is counts for little beside the wealth that shall be. The creation of new wealth, a new abundance greater than the world has ever known, is easily within the capacity of our institutions and of our organization of industry." (2) "We must husband our resources, and at the same time promote their most rapid development. We must learn to build fleets in as many months as it formerly took years. We must form serviceable armies, and out of comparatively inefficient material. With prisoners and machines we must sow our fields, work our mines, increase our production of war material. We must put to work thousands of heads and hands that have heretofore been unproductive. We must check our

luxury in arts and sciences which only beautify. We must reshape our forces, and direct everything to the attainment of our great aim." One observes that "the great aim" is in the first extract limited and shallow, in the second limited and temporarily noble. But each author is liable, under exchanged conditions, to the nationalism of the other.

The spirit of nationalism will come out of this war stronger than ever; and the two grand forces of our day, democracy and science, will continue as heretofore to hew grooves for it and to fail in comprehending it. These two forces are obviously far from having run their full gamut in human development. Science, as it continues its conquests, will continue its effect of over emphasizing in the public mind the function and scope of sheer reason. As democracy proceeds—that is, as the social and political significance of the average man increases—it will widen our long modern task of learning to think scientifically and to make proper use, at the same time, of the strongest emotions. Scientific commonsense will deprecate excessive nationalism, construct international laws, and prepare arms and armies. Democratic humanitarianism will continue, in the United States and everywhere, to prate about mankind and international good-will based upon the interests of all. The contemned other-worldly emotion will ever and anon shoot up

astoundingly through its national outlets, and turn to cruel or noble follies. From scientific and democratic politics, then, will come small help for what we need: namely, the moulding of political emotion into a true supernational mode.

But from organized religion and from education firm help will come when we have set ourselves patiently and humbly to draw it forth. Education may be weaned gradually from the demonaturalist notions on which for some years it has been too largely feeding, and deliberately made a means of upbuilding a real supernational spirit. Pertinent adjustments may be effected in individual studies such as political and literary history. But the central need is for the construction of a humane curriculum,—an organic arrangement of studies which shall have at least as much correspondence with the scale of human values as the medieval and classical curricula which our age has finally demolished but scarcely begun to replace. I shall confine myself to a single specific suggestion.

The secondary school curriculum (which is now perhaps the most potent influence shaping the European and American Demos) should have at the centre of it a certain course in ethics. The theme of this course should be that prime social virtue which has so far won no single current name, but which may be designated intelligibly enough as a true

fusion of justice and amity. This virtue should be held before the pupil as something which may and must be more and more clearly apprehended by the human mind; as something which nevertheless cannot be comprehended and actualized through the mere exercise of our rationality; as something not invented by human society but superimposed upon it, for arduous fulfillment, by God (assuming that this discredited term may after a time be rehabilitated in the sphere of education.) The teacher's main endeavor would be to designate concretely the workings of this virtue by calling into requisition the student's knowledge of biography, literature, history and other humane studies. The result would be that the youth would gain a real even though weak grasp of a sound criterion to guide his feelings in approaching the manifold specialties of present day public life. He would be prepared to question pacifism and militarism, sentimental democratism and scientific bureaucratism, and all other specialisms fostered by the demonaturalist spirit, as to the degree in which each is capable of advancing amity and justice in fusion. He would in a measure be immune from the shallow conception of evolutionary progress which has so widely pervaded the education, the literature, and the general thinking of our time. He would learn to view public progress, not as a cubic increase and extending

ramification of the stream of life, but as a rise in the total level of justice and amity.

That the progress-idea as shaped by our age has quickened the extension of hospital facilities, the diffusion of sanitary arrangements, the bettering of labor conditions, the lessening of the drink evil, and so on, may be admitted without confuting the proposition I have been following: namely, that this idea has meant, not a new vision, but a *reduction* of the Second Renaissance vision of progress. When the chief driving-force of life, human emotion, has been drawn out from the conflicting trenches which have been dug for it by the demomatural view of progress, it will begin to reanimate and reshape the preternatural conception of Goethe and his chief contemporaries.

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